

2036510

LUCASSIN
AND
NICOLETTE
~~~~~  
~~~~~  
Ida-Macdonough

A


0
0
0
1
4
8
2
1
3
2



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

NEX

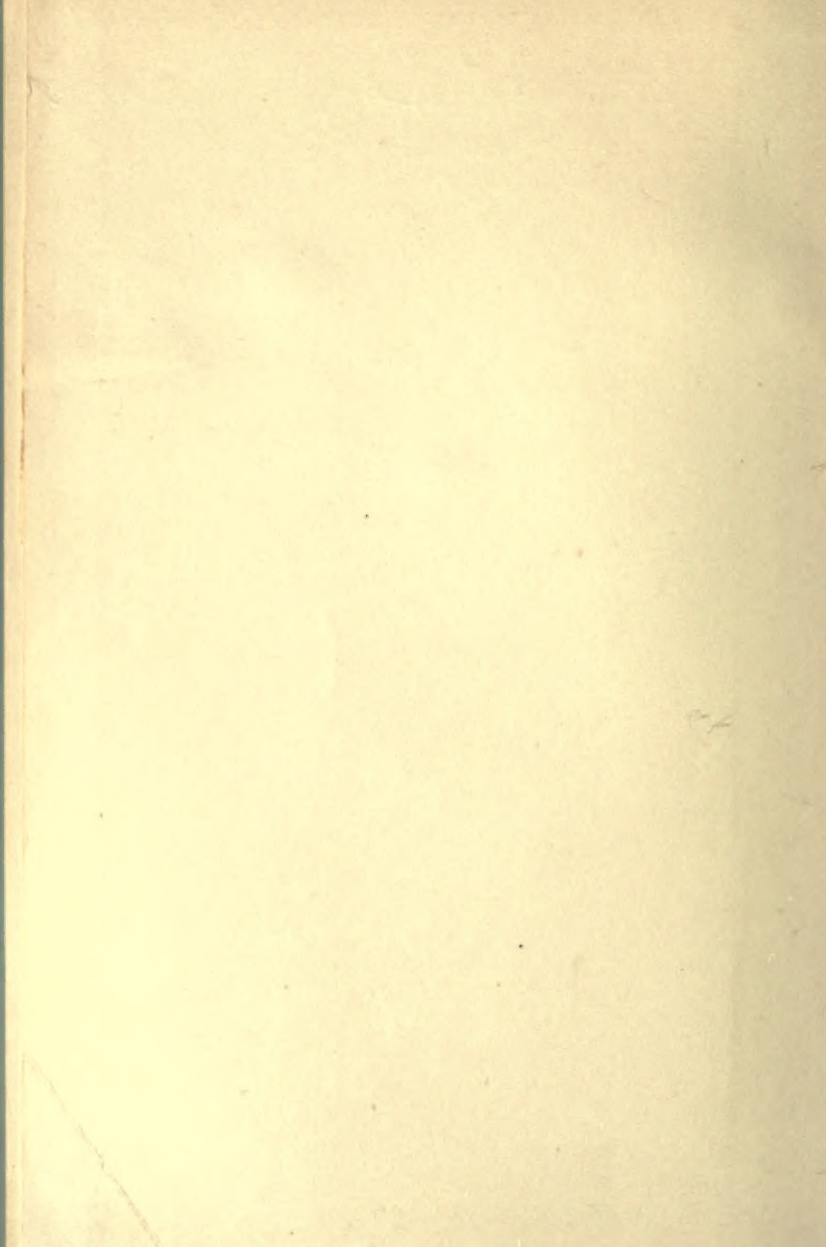




Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

For Helen

None so pained - so sorrow-stricken
But will feel his spirit quicken
Will he choose to list - to this
So sweet - it is. " arch.



AUCASSIN
AND NICOLETTE



AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE.

AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE

THE LOVERS OF PROVENCE

A MS. SONG-STORY OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

RENDERED INTO MODERN FRENCH

By ALEXANDRE BIDA

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE AND PROSE

By A. RODNEY MACDONOUGH

ILLUSTRATED

WITH ENGRAVINGS AFTER DESIGNS BY A. BIDA, MARY HALLOCK FOOTE,
W. H. GIBSON, AND F. DIELMAN



BOSTON
KNIGHT AND MILLET

COPYRIGHT, A.D, 1880.

BY FORDS, HOWARD, AND HULBERT.

Stack
AnneK

70

1426

ESM27

1880

2036510



AUCASSIN ARMING FOR BATTLE.

NOTE

THE treasure-trove of early French minstrelsy never has been more prized than in our own time. Favorite English and American writers have made such researches in the land of

“Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburn’d
mirth,”

that certain delightful relics, like the minstrel-tale of the loves of Aucassin and Nicolette, have achieved a new fame of their own. The devisers of the present translation of this charming little romance scarcely could have hit upon a more tasteful variation from the conventional holiday-book. The work itself is instinct with the beauty of nature and the spirit of poesy, when skies were fair

and poesy was young. Even to chance upon some fragment of it, is to invest it thereafter with a summer charm.

Walter Pater, in his "Studies in the History of the Renaissance," quotes the brief passage — almost matchless for insouciance and the lightsome troubadour spirit — of Aucassin's love-inspired recklessness in depicting the pains of a monkish heaven and the pleasures of the knightly company gathered in the other place of departed souls. Finding this buoyant waif, I was tempted into making the following paraphrase, which appeared originally in "A Masque of Poets : " —

PROVENÇAL LOVERS.

AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE.

Within the garden of Beaucaire
He met her by a secret stair, —
The night was centuries ago.
Said Aucassin, " My love, my pet,
These old confessors vex me so !
They threaten all the pains of hell
Unless I give you up, ma belle ; " —
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

“ Now, who should there in heaven be
To fill your place, *ma très-douce mie*?
To reach that spot I little care!
There all the droning priests are met; —
All the old cripples, too, are there
That unto shrines and altars cling
To filch the Peter-pence we bring; ” —
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

“ There are the barefoot monks and friars
With gowns well-tattered by the briars,
The saints who lift their eyes and whine:
I like them not — a starveling set!
Who'd care with folk like these to dine?
The other road 'twere just as well
That you and I should take, *ma belle* ! ” —
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

“ To purgatory I would go
With pleasant comrades whom we know, —
Fair scholars, minstrels, lusty knights
Whose deeds the land will not forget,
The captains of a hundred fights,
True men of valor and degree:
We'll join that gallant company, ” —
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

“There, too, are jousts and joyance rare,
And beauteous ladies debonair,
The pretty dames, the merry brides,
Who with their wedded lords coquette
And have a friend or two besides, —
And all in gold and trappings gay,
With furs, and crests in vair and gray ;” —
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

“Sweet players on the cithern strings,
And they who roam the world like kings,
Are gathered there, so blithe and free !
Pardie ! I’d join them now, my pet,
If you went also, ma douce mie !
The joys of heaven I’d forego
To have you with me there below,” —
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

The publishers of the present volume have desired to reproduce this fragment of mine, and I have cheerfully consented ; for what rhymester would not be glad to see his verse in choice companionship ? Mr. Macdonough’s literary skill, and his exact and refined scholarship, are well known among American writers, and held at their true worth. The translation which he has given

of the whole of this famous romaunt—a task that would be arduous to others—doubtless has been to him an easeful labor of love. It is an admirable and characteristic piece of his work, a sensitive rendering of the grace of the original, with its quaint turns of thought and delicacies of early Romantic feeling. The publishers have been fortunate in their choice of a translator, and it is creditable to American bookcraft that this pearl of mediæval literature should be so exquisitely reset for the enjoyment of a public whose taste for the beautiful, thus grown by what it feeds on, increases with each new year.

EDMUND C. STEDMAN.



NICOLE THE MINSTREL AT BEAUCAIRE.

PREFACE

. . . The little romance of *Aucassin and Nicolette* long ago attracted the attention of men of letters. Its first readers were struck by the fresh and youthful passion that animates it, the original form of the story, and the lively movement of its style. Only one manuscript preserves this exquisite work for us: when we think how many risks have threatened that volume with destruction since the close of the thirteenth century, at which date the minstrel's recital passed from an oral to a written form, we perceive the happy chance that enables us still to enjoy the 'sweet songs' and 'fair sayings' of the 'old captive.' If the French manuscript, No. 2168 of the National Library, had not en-

joyed a good fortune denied to many other finer books, better fitted for preservation, we should not even have conjectured the existence of *Aucassin and Nicolette*; for no old text mentions it, and there is no other production of our ancient poetry that could give us any idea of it. . . .

The author of *Aucassin* has given his own work the name of *Chantefable*, — a Song-story, — which is to be found nowhere else in French literature, and which could be applied to no other kind of composition than this one. It denotes, in fact, that mingling of prose with verse, of pieces that are sung and pieces that are “spoken, told, and related,” which distinguishes this romance alone. The very existence of this name, which the author can hardly have invented, implies that of an entire class, of which only this specimen has come down to us. These song-stories were delivered publicly, and were probably performed by several persons together. At least, that inference seems natural as to this one, from the use of the plural at the beginning of each prose portion: “Then they speak, and tell, and

relate." But it is evident that a single minstrel, if necessary, might take upon himself both the recitation of the prose and the singing of the verses. These were sung to the accompaniment of the *vielle*, or large violin, like the long passages on one rhyme of our old hero-legends. They have exactly the same form, that is to say, they are grouped in series of varying lengths upon the same rhyme or assonance: assonance, we know, is carried only by the last strong vowel, while rhyme takes in also the consonants following. It is assonance that is used in our poem, a fact which puts its high antiquity beyond doubt, and, in any case, hardly permits its origin to be placed later than the close of the twelfth century. . . .

Who was its author? The opening, in which he seems to speak of himself, of the good verses "of the *deport* of the old *caitif*," is not clear. Does *deport* signify 'narrative'? and must we understand that the poet had the story from an old prisoner, perhaps some former captive of the Saracens? or does *deport* only have the meaning of 'amusement,' 'diversion'? and does

'*caitif*' simply mean 'poor or unhappy man'? I venture to affirm nothing. Still it is not easy for me to believe that this charming prattle of love, these fresh impressions of nature, these little figures so spiritedly copied, are the work of some poor old wanderer. I should rather lean towards the first supposition; and should picture to fancy our author gayly roaming over the world, singing and declaiming the pleasant story that some old prisoner had taught him.

Doubtless it is in the region of Champagne and Picardy that he thus "went making music through the country." . . . Why is the scene laid in Provence, and not in northern France? No doubt solely on account of its very remoteness, and for the sake of gaining at the outset a half-foreign point of departure, before beginning his journey to the romantic countries of Torelore and Carthage. The author, in any case, knew very little of the region in which he places his hero. Of his own authority, he creates Aucassin and Garin Counts of *Beaucaire*, which never was a County; he puts a

great forest, nine hundred leagues square, at the gates of Beaucaire, in which lions prowl, together with wild boars. The castle of Beaucaire, moreover, is on the seashore, and the country-folk practise the business, once common, of wreckers. This suffices to convince us that this romance, so French in its form, is not, as has been supposed, a translation from the Provençal.

If he who relates the story had it, as may be believed, from some crusader returned from the East after long captivity there, we should perhaps rather recognize in it one of those numerous instances of the penetration into the West, at that period, of the stories of Greek romancers. A princess carried off by pirates, brought to the court of some far-away king or prince, inspiring that king's son with an ardent passion, driven away by the king, who persuades his son that she is dead; but pursued, overtaken, lost again by him; and at last, after a thousand crosses, attaining to the discovery of her royal family, and to a share of her lover's throne,—all that is quite the frame of the Byzantine romance. . . .

The author's special talent was that of painting details at once real and picturesque, of seizing the virgin jets of feeling in young and innocent hearts, of marking the tone and flow of familiar intercourse. Wonderful adventures, great battles, distant journeys, were not within his powers. He came upon these in his theme, since that was the taste of his age ; but he treated this part of the subject with evident carelessness, even in the beginning of his work. He makes amends for this, by executing those portions which pleased him with surprisingly simple and delicate art. We rarely find in the writings of the middle ages, so filled with flat description, impressions rendered with such truth and charm : the mild May night in which Nicolette escapes from prison, the shadow of the old tower within which she crouches while the troop of armed men is coming along the street, gleaming in the moonlight ; the flowery bower through which Aucassin looks up at the stars, form pictures full of charming poetry. Again, what more delicately elegant than the description of Nicolette moving on through the garden,

lifting her dress because of the dew? what more brilliant than her sudden appearance before the shepherd-lads, lighting up all the wood? what more charming than the flight of the two lovers, when Aucassin, "holding in his arms his love before him on his saddle-bow," rides away so free of care through the wide world? All this is not merely seen, but felt and represented by a genuine artist.

With this deep and lively feeling of the beauties of nature, the author had an eye and ear singularly quick to catch human and every-day realities. The sentinel's kindly heart, the gayety of the shepherds eating their bread on the grass, their uncouthness, the rough mischief of the one readier than the rest to talk, are touched with perfect truth and nicety. The ploughman's talk is quite remarkable: the author with a stroke contrasts his hero's more or less fanciful misfortunes with the real suffering and hard estate of the poor, their resignation next to stupidity, yet full of matter of reflection for the powerful. The ploughman cannot understand why Aucassin should weep, since he is rich; and do not the lower people even now

think in the same way? That touch of this rustic's old mother, for whom he feels so true a tenderness, goes straight to the heart; and this is a rare thing in the literature of that age, which so reluctantly leaves the circle of a narrow range of feelings, always the same, and often false, or at least conventional.

The dialogues are masterpieces at once of nature and of convention, if we may use the phrase. Certain forms constantly recurring in them when occasion offers give them an antique and almost Homeric air; on the other hand, for exactness, grace, and liveliness of expression, they unquestionably present us the flower of the language spoken in the time of Aliénor of Poitiers. In all the brilliant periods of our literature, its peculiar triumph has been dialogue, simple, witty, slightly excited, easy, ironical, or impassioned. I do not fear to say that the best pages in this style produced by modern French art do not surpass the choice parts of our Song-story.

We must name last, as that which makes the principal charm and merit of this little

romance, the pure and warm picture of youthful love, — innocent because it makes no distinction of desire and affection; above all reflection because it believes itself to be undying; childlike, passionate, absurd, and divine. It has been said, and with reason, that the author sometimes seems to be laughing at his hero; but he laughs at him as a certain character of Molière's laughs at the raptures which he nevertheless has felt, or would be glad to feel again. He had surely known the impulsive movements, the capricious flights, the childishnesses, the musings, despairs, and intoxications of love, which he has expressed so naturally, with a firm, fine touch. Surely he said to himself that all this was folly, but that he knew nothing wise which was worth it; he delighted in reviving those enchanting emotions, though he sometimes smiled himself at their exaggeration. . . .

To my feeling, the most finished piece of this kind is the talk of the two lovers when Nicolette approaches the dungeon within which she heard Aucassin moaning. He is a prisoner, she a fugitive; they are about to

part, perhaps forever ; their love is so strong that each would give up life for the other ; they must have, it seems, a thousand things of highest consequence to say to each other : yet there they are, she leaning against the buttress, he at the bottom of his dungeon, delightfully disputing which of the two loves the other best. Does not that recall the admirable scene in *Tartuffe*, which Dorine ends by exclaiming, —

‘To tell you true, all lovers are mere madmen.’

Lovers do not speak the same language in the twelfth as in the seventeenth century, but they say much the same things.

The extravagance of Aucassin’s love not only leads him to neglect his knightly duties, to defy his father, and at last to desert his high station in society for a life of wanderings : it urges him even to break the yoke imposed by religion in the middle ages on thoughts at least, if not on actions. There is nothing in all the literature of the time at all resembling that amazing passage in which the son of Count de Beaucaire, exasperated by the disappearance of his love,

rejects hopes of heaven and fears of hell, and exclaims as a great lady in the seventeenth century did, that there must be far better company in the latter than in the former of those abodes. Our author here gives his frolic wit full play : it might suffice for Aucassin to say that he would not care for heaven without Nicolette, and that hell with her would be delightful ; the rest is the author's embroidery, who avails himself of this opportunity to breathe out feelings he would not have dared utter in his own name. We detect in this extraordinary tirade the hatred felt by the minstrels, the harpers, those who lived by feasts and tourneys, who profited by the tastes for pleasure and often by the vices of the 'noble dukes,' the 'gallant knights,' and the 'fair gracious ladies,' towards those morose 'old priests' who ceased not to preach abstinence, charity, fasting, and alms, and many a time caused the dismissal of all the joyous and hungry troop of pleasure-makers. We must not take this invective literally, — it is a petulant outburst with no deep meaning ; our author would not so easily, in truth and ear-

nest, have given himself over to eternal damnation ; in another place he speaks of God who loves those that love each other, and doubtless that is the God on whose indulgence he counted.

The style of *Aucassin and Nicolette* affords an excellent instance of the capabilities of the French language in the twelfth century, when well handled. It is far from true that all our ancient prose composers write as well : any one who reads the other tales that figure with *Aucassin* in the same volume of the Elzevir Library will readily perceive the difference. In this work the form of expression is not cumbrous, nor loaded with useless words, nor intricate with disconnected constructions ; every thing is lively, exact, and clear. A point to be particularly remarked is the rhythm, which gives constant life and symmetry to the utterance. This prose was meant to be recited, almost to be dramatically played, and not to be coldly read ; and hence it derives its rare qualities. We shall see by reading it whether one has the right to say that our ancient tongue was barbarous, uncouth, and indis-

tingent. Modern days have produced nothing better : Voltaire or Mérimée might have envied its flowing grace and its movement at once careless, firm, and rapid.

The translator felt the certain difficulty of rivalling such a model ; yet he has attempted the task, and I do not hesitate to say that he has succeeded. His work in many places is rather that of transferring than translating ; in other instances he has adhered closely to the original ; he is always singularly happy in interpreting its spirit and feeling, and in reflecting all of its charm which is not quite inseparably connected with its mere form. It will surprise the reader to find so delicate and skilful a pen held by the hand that wields the pencil so well ; the public will excuse its hesitation in believing that BIDA can write excellently, by its conviction that he draws wonderfully. Yet the twofold accomplishment must be owned, — the prose and the smooth verses of the master be enjoyed, while we admire the illustrations on which, doubling the interest of the performance, he has been pleased to bestow his own skill with the

graver. The old narrator wrote the text and the music of his work ; his imitator composes the text and the illustrations : each is worthy of the other. The 'telling' and the 'singing' of the old time cannot have charmed more than the modern story and the sketches will please. I hasten to leave the reader to his enjoyment of them, asking his indulgence for detaining him these few moments. BIDA thought that a slight introduction would be appropriate before reading this ancient romance so charmingly presented in its modern form. I have been fortunate, in thus linking my name with his, to win this public testimony to so dear and valued a friendship.

GASTON PARIS.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY NOTE	iii

By EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN.

PREFACE, AND REVISION OF THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT TEXT	ix
--------------------------------------------------------------------	----

By GASTON PARIS.

SONG-STORY: AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE .	27
--------------------------------------	----

English Version by A. RODNEY MACDONOUGH.
From the Modern French of ALEXANDRE BIDA.

THE ILLUSTRATIONS

1. AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE *Frontispiece.*

Designer ALEXANDRE BIDA.

Engraver J. KARST.

2. AUCASSIN ARMING FOR BATTLE iii

Designer ALEXANDRE BIDA.

Engraver JOHN A. COUGHLAN.

3. NICOLE THE MINSTREL AT BEAUCAIRE . . ix

Designer ALEXANDRE BIDA.

Engraver W. HEINEMANN.

4. CLIPPING THE WINGS OF LOVE xxvi

Designer ALEXANDRE BIDA.

Engraver JOHN FILMER.

5. KNIGHT, OR LOVER? 30

Designer ALEXANDRE BIDA.

Engraver JOHN KARST.

6. NICOLETTE IMPRISONED 34

Designer MARY HALLOCK FOOTE.

Engraver JOHN P. DAVIS.

-
7. NICOLETTE AND THE PILGRIM 46
Designer ALEXANDRE BIDA.
Engraver JOHN FILMER.
8. NICOLETTE ESCAPING THROUGH THE GARDEN 48
Designer ALEXANDRE BIDA.
Engraver HENRY MARSH.
9. NICOLETTE AT AUCASSIN'S DUNGEON-GRATE 50
Designer MARY HALLOCK FOOTE.
Engravers SMITHWICK and FRENCH.
10. NICOLETTE CROSSING THE CASTLE MOAT . 54
Designer W. HAMILTON GIBSON.
Engraver JOHN FILMER.
11. NICOLETTE AND THE SHEPHERDS 56
Designer ALEXANDRE BIDA.
Engraver JOSEPH HARLEY.
12. THE BOWER IN THE WOOD. 58
Designer W. HAMILTON GIBSON.
Engraver JOSEPH HARLEY.
13. AUCASSIN AND THE PLOUGHMAN 66
Designer FREDERICK DIELMAN.
Engraver JOHN KARST.
14. THE LOVERS ON THE SEA-SHORE 72
Designer ALEXANDRE BIDA.
Engraver JOHN FILMER.

15. THE SARACENS BRING NICOLETTE TO CAR-
THAGE 74

Designer . . . W. HAMILTON GIBSON.

Engravers . . . SMITHWICK and FRENCH.

16. THE PRINCESS NICOLETTE IN CARTHAGE . 76

Designer . . . MARY HALLOCK FOOTE.

Engraver HENRY MARSH.

*** *The illustrations are engraved on wood: those designed by BIDA, after the original etchings made by him for his French edition; the others, after drawings made for this volume by the artists named.*

AUGASSIN ET NICOLETTE



CLIPPING THE WINGS OF LOVE.



AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE

SONG

Who will list to-day the verses
By a hapless captive writ,
Who the world-known tale rehearses, —
Soothing so the pain of it, —
Of that charming youthful pair,
Aucassin and Nicolette?
You shall hear therein grief's passion
That the youth was fain to prove,
Wrought him by the damsel's love,
Sung in noble, tender fashion.
For the wise old poet, able
To vary wit with cheer in fable,
Tells of nought but good and fair.
None so pained, so sorrow-stricken,
So afflicted with black cares,

None such crushing evil bears,
But will feel his spirit quicken,
Will he choose to list to this,
So sweet it is.

STORY.

Count Bougars de Valence waged war on Count Garin de Beaucaire, — so great and dreadful and deadly a war, that not a day went by that he did not set himself before the gates, walls, and defences of the town with a hundred knights and ten thousand soldiers, foot and horse. He burned his lands, ravaged his country, and killed his people. Count Garin de Beaucaire was old and feeble; he had had his day. He had never an heir, neither son nor daughter, except only a young fellow, who was such an one as I shall tell you of. The name of the lad was Aucassin; he was comely, tall, and gracious, well-made as to legs and feet, and shapely in body and arms. His hair was flaxen and curly in little ringlets, his eyes changeful and laughing, his color delicately bright, his nose high and well set.

And he was so well furnished with all excellences that there was no bad quality in him: but he was so mightily stricken by love, which conquers every thing, that he would not choose either to be a knight, or to don armor, or to go to tourneys, or to do any thing at all that he ought to do. His father and his mother said to him: —

— Son, take your arms, bestride your horse, defend your lands, and come to your people's help. If they were to see you among them, they would strike harder for their own bodies and goods, for your land and ours.

— Sire, answered Aucassin, what is it that you tell me? May God never grant me any thing that I ask him, if ever I become a knight, or mount horse and go into the fray where I might strike or take blows, until you have given me Nicolette, my dear sweetheart, whom I love so well!

— Son, says his father, that may not be. Let Nicolette go. She is a captive who was brought from a foreign land. The viscount of this city bought her from the Saracens, and brought her hither. He held her at the

font, baptized her, and made her his god-daughter; he will give her one of these days some one under a knight's degree, and above a squire's, who will gain an honorable living for her. You have nothing at all to do with her; and, if you want to take a wife, I will give you the daughter of a king or a count. There is no so great lord in France who will not give you his daughter, if you wish her.

— Good faith, father, answers Aucassin, is there to-day any rank in this world so high that if Nicolette, my sweet darling, were set in it, she would not find herself worthy of it? Were she Empress of Constantinople or Germany, Queen of France or England, even that would be little enough for her, so noble is she, and worthy, and good, and furnished with all good qualities.

SONG.

Dwelt in Beaucaire's castle stately,
Aucassin, Count Garin's son,
He, though crossed and pining greatly,
Would not from sweet love be won.



KNIGHT, OR LOVER?



Angry speech cannot restrain him,
Though his father aye must scold ;
And his mother : — Scapegrace ! crying,
— Dare you wish it ? not denying
Nicolette is fair and pure,
Hither fetched, a captive, sure,
From the country of the Paynim,
By caitiff Saracens, and sold.
If you must be wiving shortly,
Choose some maid of high degree.
— Mother, wish not that for me.
Nicolette is modest, courtly,
Chaste her heart, and fair her face ;
Right that I one day embrace
Her lovely body, by love's grace ;
So dear to me.

STORY.

When Count Garin de Beaucaire perceives that he cannot draw his son Aucassin away from the love of Nicolette, he goes to seek the viscount of the city, who was his vassal, and bespeaks him thus : —

— Sir Viscount, cause Nicolette, your god-daughter, to be put away out of sight. Cursed be the country whence she came

into this land ! For by reason of her I lose Aucassin, who will not become a knight, nor do any thing of that he ought to do. And know well, that if I can lay hold on her, I will have her burned alive, and you also may stand in great fear for yourself.

— Sire, answered the viscount, I am sorry that Aucassin comes and goes, and tries to have speech with her. I bought that child with my moneys, I held her at the font and baptized her, and made her my god-daughter. I would have given her some one under a knight's degree, and above a squire's, who would have gained an honorable living for her. Your son Aucassin should have had nothing at all to do with her. But since it is your will and pleasure, I will send her into such a country and such a place that he shall never more see her again.

— Take heed to yourself, answers Count Garin ; great harm might befall you from this !

They parted. The viscount was very rich ; he had a beautiful palace that looked on a garden. He has Nicolette shut up there,

in a chamber in the highest story, and he places an old woman near her to keep her company. He has bread and meat and wine brought to them, and every thing they can have need of. Then he has the door closed up, so that no one may go into it, nor come out of it, and all made tight, saving one very small window that opened on the garden, through which a little fresh air came in.

SONG.

Nicolette, then, is in thrall,
In a lofty vaulted hall,
Strongly built, with painting dight,
None the least for her delight.
Near the window sad she cowers,
Down into the garden gazes,
Sees the sweet half-opened flowers,
Hears, within the leafy mazes,
Chirp of birds in shadowed bowers.
Then a lonely orphan soul
Feels herself poor sad Nicole.
— Oh, dear Lord, why am I here?
My cherished care, my Aucassin,
Well you weet I love you merely.
I wis, as true hearts only can,

Your love requites me even as dearly.

They by reason of our love

Cast me in this prison drear

Where I pine my life away.

But, by Mary's Son above,

Here no longer will I stay.

Sure and soon I will go free,

If that may be.

STORY.

Nicolette was in prison, as you have seen and understood, in that great chamber. The rumor spread through all the country that Nicolette was lost. Some said that she had taken to flight out of the region ; others said that Count Garin de Beaucaire had put her to death. If any one was rejoiced at this, Aucassin took great grief from it. He goes to find the viscount, and bespeaks him thus :—

— Sir Viscount, what have you done with Nicolette, my dear sweet friend, the thing that I most loved in the world ? Have you torn her away from me ? Wot you well that if I die for it, account will be required of



NICOLETTE IMPRISONED.



you for this ; and that will be full just, for you will have killed me with both hands, in ravishing from me what I love most in all the world.

— Fair sir, said the viscount, let that go. Nicolette is a captive whom I brought from a strange country. I bought her from the Saracens with my own moneys. I held her at the font, and baptized her, and made her my god-daughter. I have brought her up, and I would have given her one of these days some one, less than knight, and more than squire, who would have gained an honorable living for her. This is not a fitting thing for you. But rather take the daughter of a king or a count. Moreover, what should you think to have gained if you had taken her for a mistress, and brought her to your bed ? You would profit very little by that, for your soul would be in hell through all eternity, and you would never enter paradise.

— What have I to do in paradise ? I have no care to get there, but only to have Nicolette, my dearest, whom I love so much. For the only sort of people who go to para-

dise are these I tell you of : old priests, old maimed cripples, who crawl night and day before their altars, and in their old crypts and then people who wear those ragged old cloaks, and are dressed in those old monks' frocks, people that go naked and barefoot, covered with boils, and dying of cold and thirst, starvation and misery. People like those go to paradise ; I have nothing to do with them : but I had much liefer go to hell ; for to hell go the young gallants, and goodly knights who died in tourney and in noble wars, and fair squires and gentlemen. Certes, I choose well to go with these. Thither too go the fair and noble ladies who have two or three lovers besides their lords. Thither go the gold and the silver, miniver and gray furs, and the harp-players and minstrels, and the kings of the world. With these I would fain go, if only I may have Nicolette, my sweet true love, with me.

— Be sure, answers the viscount, you talk of her to no purpose : you shall never see her again. And if you were to speak with her, and your father should come to know it, he would burn us both alive, her and me,

and you might stand in great fear for yourself.

—That makes me sorrowful, said Aucassin, and all in grief he leaves the viscount.

SONG.

Aucassin, dejected, tristful,
No word speaking, leaves the place.
Solace none for him, so wistful
Of her, lily-fair in face.
Nor any man, I wis, so sage,
As with words his grief t'assuage.
Towards his father's palace splendid
Slowly back he wends his way ;
Climbs the terrace-steps full slowly,
Shuts his chamber, so he may
Give himself to musings wholly ;
Wails his wretched hap with cries,
Loud laments, and weeping eyes,
Still renewed and never ended.
— Nicolette, O dearest creature,
Sweet in parting, sweet to greet,
Sweet in speech, in havior sweet,
Sweet in kisses, sweet in feature,
Face than day more pure and fair,
Brightest eyes, that fill with care

All my heart, and sad despair
That the pain of such a strife
May not end till end of life,
My dearest fere !

STORY.

Whilst Aucassin was in his chamber, so grieving for Nicolette his love, the Count de Valence, who had his war to keep up, did not neglect his work. He had summoned his horsemen and his footmen, and takes his way towards the castle to assault it. The rumor spreads of that, and Count Garin's knights and servants arm and hurry to the walls and gates to defend the castle ; and the townsmen climb to the embrasures, and hurl down tiles and sharp stakes. While the assault was most furious, Count de Beaucaire came to the chamber where Aucassin held in grief, and pined for Nicolette his darling whom he loved so well.

— Ha, son ! said he, are you so weak a wretch as to look on while your strong and stately castle is assaulted ? Now wot you well, if you lose it you are disinherited.

Come, son, take your weapons, mount and defend your having ; — give good help to your men, and go into the battle. No need is there that you should strike any man, or that any other strike you. If our vassals see you in the thick of them, they will fight the better for their own goods and bodies, for your land and mine ; and you are so tall and stout that since you can do it, you ought to do it.

— Father, says Aucassin, what are you saying ? May God grant me nothing of what I ask him for, if I make myself a knight, mount horse and go to battle, or if I strike knights or they strike me, until you have given me Nicolette, my darling whom I love so well.

— Son, says the father, that cannot be. I would liefer lose all I have than give her to you for wife.

He goes away. And when Aucassin sees him going away, he calls him back.

— Father, says Aucassin, come hither. I will make a proposition to you.

— What is it, good son ?

— I will don armor, and will go into the battle, on condition that if God brings me

back safe and sound, you will let me see Nicolette, my dear sweetheart, such time as to say two or three words to her, and to give her but one kiss.

— I grant it, answers the father.

He gives him his word upon it, and makes his son happy.

SONG.

Blithe his father's pledge to hold,
Aucassin heart-full of bliss is,
Nor would bribe of purest gold,
Though ten thousand marks were told,
Win him to forego those kisses.
Straight he bids his squire give heed,
For the battle soon is dight.
Helm on head and sword by side,
From his neck his buckler swinging,
Clenchèd hand to stout lance clinging,
Full equipped he mounts his steed.
I will swear none e'er saw knight
Bear himself with higher pride.
Swift he thinks of her so soft ;
Bids the steed his spur obey ;
Head upraised, and lance aloft,
Through the midmost gate makes way,
Straight to the fray.

STORY.

Aucassin advances, armed and mounted, as you have heard and understood. Perdie! how bravely his armor befits him, shield around neck, helm on head, his sword-tassels on his left hip! And the youth is tall and stout, well made and goodly, and the horse he rides fiery and swift; and he reins him straight through the middle way of the gate. Now, believe not that he thinks of taking oxen, cows, or kids, or of killing a knight, or that some knight may kill him. No, no, he thinks not of that, but muses so deep of Nicolette, his true love, that he forgets his bridle, and what he is there to do. And the horse, feeling the spur, hurries him into the thick of the fight, and dashes into the press of his enemies, who on all sides lay hands on him, and capture him. They snatch away his shield and lance, take him prisoner outright, and are already talking of what death they would make him die. Not till then does Aucassin heed them.

— Ha! God, he cries; dear soul! Lo, the enemy who are hurrying me away, and

mean to cut off my head! And, once my head cut off, I shall never more speak with Nicolette, my darling whom I love so well! I have yet my good sword here, and am in saddle on my good horse, still fresh; and if I do not now defend myself for her sake, and she does not cease to love me, may God never come to her help!

The young fellow is tall and stout, the horse under him is fiery. Now he lays hand to sword, and begins to strike right and left. He slashes helms and visors, hands and arms, and makes a slaughter about him as the boar slays the dogs that attack him in the forest. He strikes down ten of their knights, grievously wounds seven of them, escapes from the mellay, and gallops back, sword in hand. Count Bougars de Valence, having heard say that they were just about hanging his enemy Aucassin, comes towards the place. Aucassin perceives him, lifts his sword, and strikes him so dour on the helm, that he drives it in over his head. The count is stunned by the blow, and falls to the ground. Aucassin thrusts out his arm, grasps him, takes him prisoner by the nose-

piece of his casque, and brings him to his father.

— Father, says Aucassin, here is your enemy who has warred on you and done you so much evil. Now these twenty years this war has lasted, that never a man could bring to end.

— Good son, says the father, this is the way in which you should begin your knight's career in arms, and think no longer of your follies.

— Father, answers Aucassin, do not go on to berate me, but keep your promise.

— Ay, what promise, dear son?

— How, father, have you forgotten it? By my head, whoever else forgets it, I do not mean to forget it; for I hold it much at heart. Now, did you not promise, when I took arms and went to battle, that if God brought me back safe and sound, you would let me see Nicolette, my sweet love, long enough to say two or three words to her, and to give her but one kiss? Did you promise me that? And I will have you keep your word to me.

— I? says the count. May God never

help me, if I keep such a promise! And if that girl were here, I would have her burned alive, and you should stand in great fear yourself.

— Is that the end of words? says Aucassin.

— God help me, says the father, yes.

— In truth, says Aucassin, I am full sorely grieved to see that a man of your years lies. — Count de Valence, I have taken you prisoner?

— Yes, sire, assuredly, says the count.

— Give me your hand.

— Sire, right gladly.

And he lays his hand in Aucassin's.

— Do you swear to me, says Aucassin, that so long as you shall be alive, if you find ways to do my father dishonor, or hurt in body or goods, you will never fail to do it?

— For God's sake, sire, do not make sport of me. But bring me to ransom. You could not ask me so much, in gold or silver, steeds or palfreys, miniver or gray furs, dogs or birds, that I would not give it you.

— Ha! says Aucassin, do you not confess that you are my prisoner?

— Yes, sire, I confess it.

— Well, then, may God never help me, if I do not lop off your head, unless you swear me that.

— In God's name, I swear to you whatever you please.

And he takes oath. And Aucassin sets him on a horse, mounts another himself, and escorts him until he is in safety.

SONG.

When the Count Garin was 'ware
How little skilled his wit to make
Aucassin, his son, forsake
Nicolette, the lily-fair,
Stern and watchful, he bethought him
Of a dungeon underground,
Strongly-vaulted, dank and dreary ;
Thither as a captive brought him.

There shut out from light and sound,
Life to him was dark and weary.
Plaining thus did he begin :
— O lily-flower, my Nicolette,
Sweetheart of so lissome shape,
Sweeter art thou than the grape,

Mellow fruit, or rosy wine
Poured from golden beaker fine.
On a day a pilgrim wight
Hither came from Limousin,
Stricken, sick, in woeful plight.
Stretched I saw him on his bed
Voiceless, breathless, well-nigh dead.
Passing by the bed, O wonder !
Chancing then your robe to lift,
Your ermine cloak, and snowy shift,
Unwittingly
You gave to see
The ankle fine that peeped from under.
When the pilgrim saw that sight,
Cured, from bed he rose outright,
Healed, and sound, and joyous-hearted,
Home for Limousin departed.
O ! fere, for whom I pine away,
Nicolette, oh dearest creature,
Sweet in coming, sweet in going,
Sweetly speaking, sweetly doing,
Sweet in kisses, sweet in feature,
Face more pure and fair than day !
Cruel souls, that plot for harming,
Or harbor hate to one so charming !
For your sake, withouten fault,
Here in pain and grief I lie.



NICOLETTE AND THE PILGRIM.

Surely on some coming morrow,
Wan with weeping, spent with sorrow,
In this drear and dismal vault,
Well I know that I must die
For you, my sweet.

STORY.

So Aucassin was put in prison, as you have heard and understood; and Nicolette, on the other hand, was in her chamber. It was the summer-time in the month of May, when days are long and nights still and fair. Nicolette was lying on her bed. She saw the moon shining bright through the window, and heard the nightingale singing in the garden, and thought came to her of Aucassin, her lover whom she cherished so. She set to musing of Count Garin de Beaucaire, who hated her cruelly; she thought that she could not stay there, that if any one betrayed her, and Count Garin came to know it, he would put her to death swift and sudden. She saw that the old woman who was with her was asleep. She rose up, dressed herself in a fine robe that

she had, of cloth of silk, took the bed-clothes and some table-cloths, knotted them together, made as long a rope as she could, fastened it to the casement-shaft, and let herself slip down into the garden. She took her dress with one hand in front, and with the other behind, and lifted her skirt on account of the dew she saw on the grass, and went on along the garden. She had flaxen hair, curly in little ringlets, and eyes changeful and laughing, and a delicate color, and her nose was prominent and well set, and her lips were redder than cherries and roses in summer-time, and she had small white teeth, and little firm breasts that rounded out her dress as if they were two cocoa-nuts, and she was so slender in the waist that one might have clasped it in two hands ; and the daisies she crushed under her toes, and that sprang up again, looked quite dark compared with her feet and ankles, so fair the damsel was. She came to the gate at the back of the garden, unclosed it, and went out into the streets of Beaucaire, along the shadow, for the moon was shining bright. And she



NICOLETTE ESCAPING THROUGH THE GARDEN.

walked on till she came to the tower where her lover was. The tower was buttressed with columns at distances, and she crouched against one of the columns. She wrapped herself up in her cloak, and put her head into a crevice of the tower, which was old. Then she heard Aucassin weeping within, and keeping great grief, and mourning for his dear love whom he cherished so; and when she had listened to him long enough, she spoke to him.

SONG.

Nicole then in mournful fashion
Close against a buttress crept,
Nor could she refuse compassion,
Listening how her lover wept.
She bespeaks him thus :

— Dear youth,

Fair and noble, valiant lover,
I am fain to tell you truth.
Vain are sighs and tears, — give over
Sore lamenting. What relief
Comes from never-ceasing grief,
Sith you cannot make me wife?
For your kindred and your sire

Threaten me with wrath full dire.
For your sake I must depart,
Seeking foreign lands in flight.

More she says not — severs deft
One, the longest, of her tresses ;
Drops it through the dungeon's cleft.
He has seized it with caresses,
Kissed, and pressed it to his heart.
Past that instant of delight,
He renews his tears and ruth
For her, his life.

STORY.

When Aucassin heard Nicolette tell him that she meant to go away into another country, he could not but fall into despair.

— Fair sweet friend, he says, you must not go, for you would cause my death. For the first man who should see you, and could do it, would take you at once and make you his. And if you were to come into any other arms than mine, think not I would even stay to find a knife, to stab me to the heart with it and kill myself. No, surely, I would not stay so long, but I should dart



NICOLETTE AT AUCASSIN'S DUNGEON-GRATE.

from as far away as I could see a wall or a rock, and I would dash my head so roughly against it, that I should burst out my eyes and scatter my brains. And yet, I had liefer die of such a death than to hear that you are in the embrace of another man than myself.

—Aucassin, she answers, I do not believe that you can love me as much as you say — but I — I love you more than you love me.

—My faith! says Aucassin, sweet darling, it is not possible that you should love me as much as I love you. A woman cannot love a man as much as a man loves a woman: for a woman's love is in her eyes, and on the point of her bosom, and at the tips of her toes; but a man's love is rooted in his heart, and cannot go out of it.

Whilst Aucassin and Nicolette were thus talking, the town watch came along the street, their drawn swords under their coats, for Count Garin had given them command that if they could lay hold on Nicolette, they should put her to death. Now the sentinel who was atop the tower saw them coming, and heard them talking, as they went, of Nicolette, and threatening to kill her.

—Perdie! said the sentinel, what pity if they should kill so lovely a damsel! It would be a right good deed if I could warn her not to let herself be seen, and she could keep herself hid. For if they were to kill her, Aucassin, my young lord, would die of it, and that would be great pity.

SONG.

Now the dungeon sentinel
On the topmost wall who stood,
Brave and courteous and good,
Kindly too, has heard full well
All her converse with her lover.
Giving warning, thus he sings,
—Damsel with the smile so tender,
And the lissome shape so slender,
I have hearkened all your speaking
With the youth who, captive lying
For your eyes, is slowly dying.
Harm to you this moment brings.
Ware the soldiers for you seeking!
Drawn swords with their cloaks they cover;
They will murder you outright,
Save you 'scape by sudden flight.
So heed aright!

STORY.

— Hé, said Nicolette, may the soul of thy father and thy mother rest in peace, thou who hast so kindly and gently given me warning. Please God, I will hide myself from them, and may he protect me!

She shrinks within her cloak in the shadow of the buttress until the soldiers have passed by, and bids farewell to Aucassin. She goes on and comes to the base of the castle. The wall had been broken and repaired; she climbs up it, and goes on till she finds herself between the wall and the moat. She looks down, and seeing the moat still and deep, she feels great fear.

— Ah, God! she says; dear soul! if I let myself drop, I shall break my neck, and if I stay they will take me to-morrow and burn me alive. But I had liefer die here than that all the gaping people come to-morrow to gaze at me.

She made the sign of the cross on her face, and let herself slip into the moat; and when she reached the bottom her beautiful feet and her lovely hands, which never had

known what it was to be hurt, were bruised and scratched, and the blood flowed from them in many places, and nathless she felt neither harm nor pain, by reason of the great fear she had. And if she had sore trouble to get down, she found very greatly more in climbing up. She thought it would be no wise well to stay there, and she found a sharp stake that those from within had thrown down in defending the castle. She climbed right slowly, one foot after the other, so that at last very hardly she reached the top.

Now there was a forest hard by, two bow-shots off, which was in length and breadth at least thirty leagues. It was full of wild beasts and serpents. She was afraid of being devoured if she should go into it, and bethought herself, on the other hand, that if they were to find her there, they would take her back into the town, and burn her alive.

SONG.

When Nicolette, the lily-fair,
Toiling, breathless, tired, had clomb



NICOLETTE CROSSING THE CASTLE MOAT.

Hardly, to the moat's high comb,
Well-nigh fainting with despair
She begins to Heaven a prayer :
— King of majesty, our Father,
Pity take upon my woe !
For I know not what to do.
If I pass to yon deep wood
There I surely fall a prey
To the beasts that roam alway.
If I linger, they will find me
At the earliest streak of day,
And for burning seize and bind me.
But, by the God I pray for pity,
Counting all, I had far rather
Be of some wild beast the food
Than go back to yonder city.
No jot will I !

STORY.

Nicolette was in despair, as you have heard. She commended herself to God, and walked on till she came to the forest. She dared not go very deep into it, by reason of the wild beasts and the serpents. She hid herself in a dense thicket, and sleep coming over her, she slept till morn-

ing, till the hour when the shepherd-lads came out of the town, and drove their flocks between the forest and the river. They gathered all together by a fair fountain which was on the border of the forest. They spread a cloak out on the ground, and put their bread on it. Whilst they were eating, Nicolette awoke at the chirp of the birds and the voices of the shepherds, and came forward towards them.

— Good children, she said, God be kind to you!

— God bless you! said one of them, who was a little less tongue-tied than the rest.

— Good children, do you know Aucassin, the son of Count Garin de Beaucaire?

— Yes, we know him right well.

— So may God help you, good children, tell him that there is a beast in this forest, that he shall come to hunt it, and that if he could catch it he would not give one limb of it for a hundred marks of gold, nor for five hundred, nor for any thing.

And they stared at her, and seeing her so beautiful they were all amazed at her.

— I should tell him that? answered the



NICOLETTE AND THE SHEPHERDS.

one who was the least tongue-tied. Bad luck to the one who shall tell it him ! You tell nothing but lies, for there is no beast in this forest so precious, neither stag, nor lion, nor boar, that one of its limbs is worth more than two farthings, or three at most ; and you talk of a great sum like that ! Ill luck to him who believes you, and who will tell it him ! You are a fairy. So we care nought for your company : go your ways.

— Ha ! good children, she answers, you will do it. The beast has such virtue that Aucassin will be cured of his trouble. And I have here five pence in a purse. Take them, and tell him that ; and say that he must hunt the beast within three days ; and if in three days he does not find it, never will he be cured of his distress.

— My faith, he answers, we will take the money, and if Aucassin comes hither we will tell him it, but we will not go to look for him.

— As God will, she answers.

Then she takes leave of the shepherd lads, and goes on her way.

SONG.

Nicolette, than lily whiter,
Parting from the herd-boys rude,
Passed within the leafy wood.
Gloomy thickets sore affright her.
Straight along a path she glides,
Dim and narrow, till it guides
Where it sevenways divides.
Then she pauses in that nook,
All alone therein she muses,
Doubting whether aye or no, —
Love her spirit so confuses, —
What her lover thinks to do,
And if in truth he loves her so.
Then, to prove his faith, she took
Leaf of fern and lily-flower,
Turf all green with grassy gloss,
Carpet fresh and soft of moss,
Branches thick, and built a bower,
Beautiful beyond compare,
Such as ne'er was seen more fair.
— God, who is all truth, I dare
Call to witness, as I swear,
That if Aucassin so dear
Coming hither, shall discover
This that I have built, and in it
Rest not, were it but a minute,



THE BOWER IN THE WOOD.



No more shall he be my lover,
Nor I his fere.

STORY.

When Nicolette had made the bower, as you have heard and understood, very fair and very pleasant, she soon covered and carpeted it with flowers and leaves, outside and inside. She hid herself close by the place in a dense thicket, to see what Aucassin would do.

Now the rumor had spread through all the country, that Nicolette was lost. Some said that she had taken flight, and others that Count Garin had caused her to be put to death. If any one was joyous at that, small joy had Aucassin of it. But Count Garin brought him out from ward. He sent for the knights and damsels of his land, and prepared a right noble festival, thinking to console his son. At the time when the feast was most joyous, Aucassin went and leaned upon a balustrade, all mournful and dejected. Great though the delight might be, he had no heart to take pleasure in it, for he could

not see her whom he loved. A knight perceiving him, came to him, and says :

— Aucassin, I also have suffered from the trouble that you bear. If you will trust me, I will give you good counsel.

— Sir, said Aucassin, great thanks.

— Mount your horse ; go and disport yourself in the thick of yonder forest. You will see the flowers and plants there, and hear the little birds sing. Perhaps too you will hear some word from which good will come to you.

— Sir, great thanks ; so will I do.

He steals away from the hall, goes down the steps, comes to the stable where his horse was. He has him saddled and bridled, puts foot in stirrup, mounts, and goes forth from the castle. He went on as far as the forest, and rode till he came to the fountain, and met the shepherd-lads just at three hours after noon. They had spread their cloaks on the grass ; they were eating their bread and taking their pleasure.

SONG.

Of the shepherds one 'gan say,
Look, the lordling comes our way,
Aucassin, the count's young heir.
May the dear Lord heal his grief,
Helping him to find relief.
'Tis a goodly youth, and rare.
So that maid with sparkling eye,
Shining face, and waist so taper,
She, my faith, was fair no less,
Who from purse full light, I guess,
Gave us wherewithal to buy
Crooks, with which our flocks are led,
Knives with sheaths, and gingerbread,
Flutes and pipes, to make us caper.
May God her bless !

STORY.

When Aucassin heard the shepherd-lads, he bethought him of Nicolette his darling, whom he loved so much ; and he supposed she had gone past that place. He spurs his horse, and comes up to them.

— Good children, God be your help !

— God bless you ! answered the one who was less tongue-tied than the rest.

— Good children, sing me the song again you were singing just now.

— We will not sing it again a jot : to the devil with him who shall sing it for you, fine sir !

— Good children, do you not know me ?

— Yes, truly ; we know well that you are Aucassin, our young lord. But we don't belong to you. We belong to Count Garin.

— Dear children, sing, I entreat you.

— Oh, body-blue ! why should we sing for you if we don't choose to ? Since there is not a man in this land so high and mighty, save Count Garin his own self, that if he were to find our oxen and cows and sheep in his meadow, and even in his corn, he would dare to drive them out of it, for fear of having his eyes poked out, why should we sing for you, if we don't choose to ?

— God help you, good children, you shall sing. See, here are ten pence I have in my purse.

— Sir, we will take the money, but we

will not sing. We have sworn it. But we will tell you a story if you like.

— Please God, says Aucassin, I had liefer have a story than nothing.

— Then, sir, we were here but a little while ago, between six and nine of the morning, and we were eating our bread at this fountain, just as we are doing now, when there came a young girl, the fairest in the world, so beautiful that we thought we saw a fairy, and so that all this wood was lighted up by her. She gave us of her money; and for that we promised her that if you should come hither we would tell you to go and hunt in this forest; that a beast is therein of which, if you could take it, you would not give a limb neither for five hundred silver marks, nor for any thing; for the beast has such virtue that, if you can take it, you will be cured of your distress. But you must take it within three days; and if you do not take it in that time from now, never will you see it. So, hunt it if you choose; and, if you don't choose, let it be. But we have quite freed ourselves of our promise to her.

— Dear children, says Aucassin, you have said full enough, and may God bring me to find her !

SONG.

Nicole's riddles well apprise him
Of her eager hopeful tryst ;
Heart no less than ear must list.
Wheeling then his steed, he hies him
To the forest deep and lonely.
— My Nicolette, 'tis for you only
I seek this wood, nor reck the while
Wolf in toils, or tusky boar,
Or stag at bay ; whate'er I do,
None other prey I hunt than you,
Weary, lost, your track pursue.
Sweetest fere, once only more
To see your eyes, to meet your smile,
Craves my heart, all else above,
Stricken nigh to death with love.
So may God, the mighty sire,
Grant the meeting I desire,
Sweet sister-friend !

STORY.

Aucassin goes through the forest seeking Nicolette, and his horse carries him at

a swift pace. Think not that the briers and thorns spared him. No, no! Indeed, they tore his garments, so that the rags of them were not enough to tie a knot withal, and the blood flows from his arms, legs, and ribs in more than twenty places, so that one might have followed him by the trail of his blood dropping on the grass. But he mused so on Nicolette his true love, that he felt neither pain nor hurt. He wandered the day long in the forest without finding trace of her. And when he saw that evening was coming, he fell to weeping because he had not found his sweetheart. He was riding in an old path grown over with grass, when he met a man, such as I am going to tell you of. He was tall and marvellously ugly and hideous. He wore leggings and shoes of ox-hide, wound about with a coarse string to above his knees. He was muffled in a frieze coat, and leaning on a stout club. Aucassin came all at once on him, and was sore afraid when he suddenly saw him quite close.

— Good brother, God help you !

— God bless you !

— Please God, what are you doing here ?

— What business is that of yours ?

— Nothing, I only ask you out of civility.

— But you, why are you weeping and behaving so sorrowfully ? Surely, if I were as rich as you, nothing in the world could make me cry.

— Bah ! do you know me ?

— Yes, I know very well that you are Aucassin, the count's son ; and if you tell me why you are weeping, I will tell you what I am doing here.

— Surely, I will very willingly tell you. I came this morning to hunt in this wood. I had the prettiest white greyhound in the world, and I have lost it, and so I weep.

— Oh, lord's heart, you cry for a wretched dog ! Great fool he who will think much of you, when there is no lord in this country so rich as that, if your father should ask him for ten, fifteen, or twenty dogs, he would not gladly give them to him, and think himself lucky. For me, I have a right to weep and lament.

— You ! and for what, brother ?

— Sir, I will tell you. I was hired to a rich villein, and I drove his plough with a



AUCASSIN AND THE PLOUGHMAN.



team of four oxen. Now three days ago a great ill-luck befell me. Of my four oxen I lost the best — Redhide, the best of my team. And I go about hunting him up, and have eaten and drunk nothing these three days ; and I dare not go back to the town because they would clap me in prison, for I have nothing to pay with. All the goods I own in the world I carry on my back. I have a poor old mother ; she had but one mattress, and they took that away from under her, and now she lies on bare straw. I am more sorry for her than myself, for goods come and go : if I have lost to-day I shall win another time. I shall pay for my ox when I am able, and for that I shall not cry a jot. While you, you cry for a dirty hound ! Great fool any one that pities you !

— Certainly you are a fine comforter, good brother ! How much was your ox worth ?

— Sir, they ask me twenty pence for it. I cannot beat them down a single doit.

— Well, take this ; here are twenty pence I have in my purse ; buy your ox again.

— Sir, great thanks. God bring you to find what you are looking for !

Aucassin leaves him, and rides on. The night was clear and mild. He wandered on till he came to the bower, which was covered with flowers within and without, above and below. And it was so beautiful that it could not be any more so. When Aucassin saw it, he stopped suddenly. The light of the moon glinted into it.

—Perdie, he said, Nicolette, my sweet friend, has gone by this place, and it is she who built this bower with her lovely hands. For the love of her and her gentleness, I will dismount here, and rest in it this night.

He slipped his foot from the stirrup to dismount. The horse was tall and large. So much was he musing on Nicolette his sweetheart, that he fell roughly on a stone, and put out his shoulder. He felt himself sore hurt, but he made all the effort he could, and with the other hand fastened his horse to a bush. He turned over on his side, and crawling along reached the bower. He looked up through a crevice from the inside, and he saw the stars in the sky, and one of them he saw brighter than the rest, and he said :

SONG.

— Star that steals from out the night,
Spark amid the moonlight set,
Smiling on me from thy height,
Sure thou hast my Nicolette.
Envious of her beauty bright,
Heaven has snatched her from my sight.¹

.
Whatsoe'er may me betide,
Dropt again to earth below,
Grant me Heaven, more kind than now,
Rising, aye with thee to bide.
For, were I a king's own son,
Thou wert peer of such an one,
My sweetest fere.

STORY.

When Nicolette heard Aucassin, for she was not far off, she came to him. She went into the bower, and threw her arms about his neck, and embraced and kissed him.

— Fair sweet friend, be welcome !

— And you, fair sweetheart, happily found !

¹ Some lines are here wanting in the original MS.

And they kissed, and gave and took kisses, and sweet was their joy.

— Ah, dear friend ! a while ago I was sore hurt in the shoulder, and now I feel neither hurt nor grief, since I have found you again.

Immediately she feels and finds that his shoulder is put out. She manages it with her lovely hands, and does so well that, by the help of God, who loves those that love one another, his shoulder comes back to its place. Then she takes flowers, fresh grass and green leaves, binds it up with a strip from her fine linen shift, and he is soon cured.

— Aucassin, fair sweet friend, whatever may become of you, think of what you have to do. If to-morrow your father commands search through this forest, and they find us, whatever they do with you, as for me, they will kill me.

— Surely, fair sweet friend, I should be sorely grieved for that ; but if I can do any thing they shall not take you.

He mounts his horse, takes his love up before him, embracing and kissing her, and they fare on into the country.

SONG.

So he quits the savage wood,
Bearing — as he holds on selle
Her he loves so passing well —
Gallant mien, and joyous mood.
Whilst with Nicolette before him
Thus they wander, how he bore him, —
If with loving arms he pressed
Her close held against his breast,
If he kissed her golden tresses,
Kissed her eyes, her lips, her neck, —
One with small endeavor guesses.
Nicolette, such warmth to check,
Erelong thus bespeaks him :

— Friend,

Whither will our wandering lead?
To some country far away?
— Sweet, I reckon not of its end,
Sith the goal I little heed,
And as little mark the way,
Over hill or over heather :
So we do but fare together,
Other trouble will not borrow.

Past the hamlets on they ride,
Past the towns, the mountains o'er,
Through the vales, as chance may guide.
Till at dawning on the morrow

They have reached the marge of land.
There they both dismounting stand
On ocean-shore.

STORY.

Aucassin dismounts from the horse with his darling, as you have heard and understood. He holds his horse by the bridle, and his love by the hand, and they set out walking along the shore. Whiles he was in such delight and pleasure (for he had with him Nicolette his sweetheart whom he cherished so), a band of Saracens landed on the coast. They seized Nicolette and Aucassin, and tied his hands and feet, and cast him into one vessel, and Nicolette into another. A storm arose and parted them. The ship which bore Aucassin sailed so far and so fast that after many adventures it came ashore at the castle of Beaucaire. And the people of the country hastened together to plunder the ship. They found Aucassin on board, and recognized him. When those from Beaucaire saw their young lord, they had great joy of it. His father and his



THE LOVERS ON THE SEA-SHORE.

mother were dead. They escorted him to the castle, and immediately became his vassals. And he possessed his lordship in peace.

SONG.

Aucassin, returned again
To Beaucaire, his lands and castles,
Over all his happy vassals
Did with gracious lordship reign ;
Vowing oft — below his breath —
That he more shall mourn always
His Nicolette, with lily face,
Than if all his noble race
Should have passed from life to death.
— In the world what nook, my sweet,
At this instant may conceal thee ?
Heaven has made no such retreat
Hid so deep in privacy,
Might I find it, but that I
There would seek thee, thence would steal thee,
My Nicolette !

STORY.

Now we leave Aucassin, and return to Nicolette. The ship in which she was be-

longed to the King of Carthage. He, be it known, was her father. She had twelve brothers, all princes or kings. When they saw Nicolette so beautiful, they did her great honor, and welcomed her joyfully, and they asked her who she was; for she seemed to them a right noble lady, and of high degree. But she knew not to tell them who she was, for she had been carried off when a very little child. They sailed on till they made land at last at the city of Carthage. And when Nicolette saw the walls of the castle, she knew who she was; and it came to her memory that she had been brought up there, and carried off when quite little. But still she was not so little that she could not remember well that she had been brought up in the city.

SONG.

Nicolette, the vessel leaving,
Touched the beach. And, first of all,
Great was her amaze, perceiving
Fortress, port, and city wall,
The very same a child she knew
When stolen by the pirate crew.



THE SARACENS BRING NICOLETTE TO CARTHAGE

Double thus her cause for grieving.
— How am I the better, sprung
Of so great and noble race,
Kin to princes, even higher,
King of Carthage for my sire,
If some day I bear disgrace,
A slave, a barbarous folk among?
My Aucassin, the thought of thee
Stinging, burning, haunteth me
With so keen and sweet a fire
That for love I near expire.
God, who knows my soul, of grace
Grant I may once more behold thee,
That thy lips may kiss my face,
Once again my arms enfold thee,
O youth so dear !

STORY.

When the King of Carthage heard Nicolette speak thus, he threw his arms round her neck.

— Fair sweet friend, said he, tell me who you are. Do not distrust me.

— Sire, I am the daughter of the King of Carthage. I was carried off when a very little child, as much as fifteen years ago.

When all they of the court heard her speak thus, they knew well that she spake truth. They made great joy over her, and escorted her to the palace in grand honor, like a king's daughter. They wanted to give her a king of the pagans for husband; but she had small thought of marrying. She mused all the time by what means she might go in search of Aucassin. She got herself a viol, on which she learned to play. When they wanted to marry her one day to a mighty pagan king, she stole away by night, came to the port, and went into hiding with a poor woman on the seashore. She took a plant that she knew, anointed her head and face with it till she stained herself all black; and she had made a close doublet, a cloak, a shirt, and breeches, and so disguised herself as a minstrel. She took the viol, went to find a sailor, and so managed that he took her aboard his ship. They unfurled the sails, and sailed away until they came to the country of Provence. And Nicolette went on shore, took her viol, and went on playing through the country, until she came to the castle of Beaucaire, where Aucassin was.



THE PRINCESS NICOLETTE IN CARTHAGE.

SONG.

Fell a day that Aucassin
At Beaucaire his state did hold
On the sward without the towers.
Round him stood his barons bold.
Looking on the grass and flowers,
Listening to the small birds' song
All the brookside copse among,
He, in wonted wise, began
Musing of his Nicolette ;
Early days of love repeating —
Love so true, so quickly fleeting ;
Days that he can ne'er forget,
Days he will for aye regret.
Hither comes the fair Nicole,
Takes her viol, drawing near.
Thus she sings :

— Most noble knights,
Or of the plain, or of the heights,
Lithe and listen, an ye may,
To the tale, full sweet in sooth,
Of Aucassin, the noble youth,
And Nicolette, his dearest fere,
Who so constant faith did cherish ;
Nothing lingering, nothing ruing,
Through the deep wood her pursuing,
Purposed for her love to perish.

A pirate crew, upon a day,
Seized them, borne as slaves away.
Nought of him this song can tell.
She at Carthage must abide,
Realm whereof her sire is king,
A mighty kingdom, by my fay !
Gladly would he make her bride
To some prince, an infidel.
Whereto, whoso may aspire,
Nicolette has small desire.
She has chosen a youthful knight,
For her master and her friend,
One whose love will never end,
And who *Aucassin* is hight,
Vowing, God her witnessing,
Until life is past and done
Other lord she will have none
Save that princely youth alone
She loves so well.

STORY.

When Aucassin heard Nicolette speak thus, he was right joyous. He took her aside and asked her, —

— Fair dear friend, know you not any other thing of that Nicolette whose song

of love and adventure you have just been singing?

— Sire, I know her as the worthiest, most gracious and chaste that ever was. She is the daughter of the King of Carthage, who took her captive at the same time that he took Aucassin, and carried her to the city of Carthage. When he learned that she was his daughter, he gave her great welcome. Now they press every day to give to her for husband one of the mightiest kings of all Spain; but she would liefer let herself be hanged or burned alive than to take a husband, how rich soever he might be.

— Ha, fair sweet friend, says Count Aucassin, if you would go back to that country to tell her to come and speak with me, I would give you of my wealth all you might choose to ask or take of it. And wot you that for her love I have not chosen to take a wife, how high soever her degree might be; but that I am awaiting her, and that other wife than herself never will I have. And if I had known where to find her, I would not have stayed to set out upon search for her.

— Sire, she says, were you to promise me

that, I would go and bring her to you, for your sake and for hers, sith I love her well.

He promises her that, and causes twenty livres to be given her. As she leaves him, he falls to weeping for the loveliness of his Nicolette, and when she sees him weeping :

— Sire, she says, do not despair thus. In a little time from now I shall have fetched her to you, into the city, and you shall see her.

And when Aucassin heard her speak thus, he was right joyful. She goes through the city to the house of the viscountess ; for the viscount, her godfather, was dead. She visits her, and makes known her secret, and the viscountess knew her again, and knew well that she was that Nicolette whom she had brought up. She had her to wash and to bathe, and to rest herself with her eight whole days. Nicolette took a plant, by name *celandine*, rubbed her face therewith, and made herself as fair as she had ever been. She dressed herself in rich garments of silk, of which that lady had a plenty. She took a seat in the chamber, upon a counterpoint of silken cloth, called the

viscountess, and bade her go to bring Aucassin her lover. And the lady did so. And when she came to the palace she found Aucassin weeping and lamenting for Nicolette his darling, because she was so long in coming ; and the viscountess said to him :

— Aucassin, lament no longer, but come with me, and I will show you the thing you love most in the world ; for it is Nicolette, your sweet love, who has come from a far country to find you.

And Aucassin was happy.

SONG.

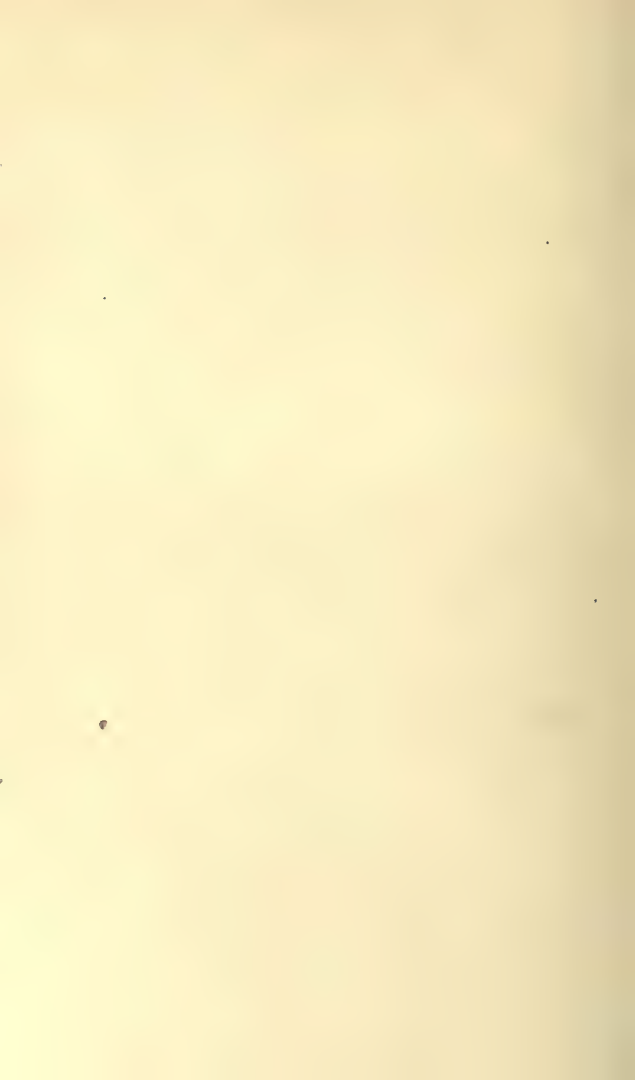
Guess if he is blithe and gay,
Soon as Aucassin is ware
That his love, the lily-fair,
Bides so little space away !
Not a whit he makes delay ;
Light of heart, with step like wings
Towards that lady's palace springs.
Straight he to the chamber hies him,
Finds his dearest love right soon.
She, the instant she espies him,

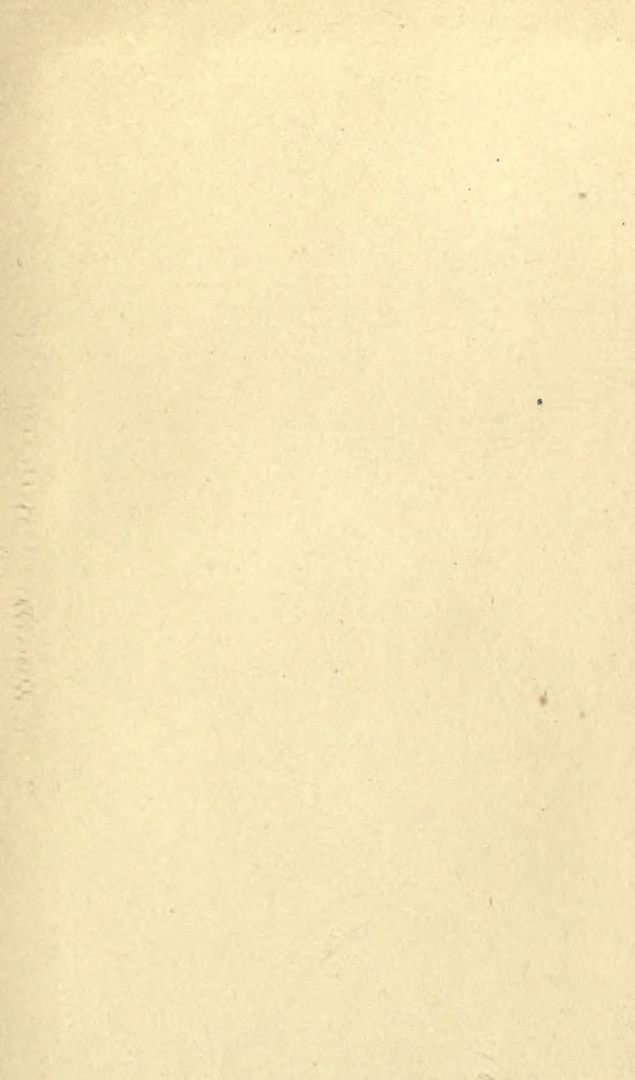
Springing, flies to his embrace,
Trembling, clinging, half a-swoon,
On his bosom hides her face.
If you question his delight,
Look upon the picture there.
Won again that waist so slender,
Lovely face, and eyes so tender,
You may think how he caressed her
As in close embrace he pressed her !

So he wore away the night ;
Then, with glimpse of morning light,
Wedding her, with ring and rite,
Made her Lady of Beaucaire.

Long and happy years they spent,
Gold and silk and purple blent.
Nought of love's delights did miss
The lover ; ne his fere, I trow,
Lacked her part of loving bliss.
God give you no less ! And so

The End is this.





UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

LD
URL

FEB 12 '71

QL

MAR 12 1971

REC'D LD-URL

QL

JUN 7 1971

MAY 11 1971

15

JAN 18 1982

REC'D LD-URL

MAY 3 1982

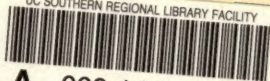
FEB 2 1982



3 1158 00721 9941

ms

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 148 213 2

